(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that there were protests against permission being given by Government to anchor this aircraft carrier at Indian port by left parties and activists; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) and (b) USS Nimitz, a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, anchored a few miles off Chennai harbour from the 2nd to 5th July, 2007.

(c) and (d) There were some protests against the visit ofUSS Nimitz to Chennai port. However, port calls are routinely made by all navies, including the Indian Navy. The policy on the port calls by foreign naval vessels does not exclude nuclear-powered vessels from calling at Indian ports with the permission of the Indian Government. An arrangement for clearance of such vessels to call at Indian ports keeping in view environmental safety aspects, has been prescribed, and this was followed in the case of visit of USS Nimitz. It has, however, been the Government's policy that port-calls by foreign naval ships, that carry nuclear weapons, are not permitted. Foreign Governments are fully aware of this.

Raksha Udyog Ratna to corporate houses

2332. SHRI SYED AZEEZ PASHA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has a proposal to grant "Raksha Udyog Ratna" status to 12 major corporate houses to involve them in defence production;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) its impact on the indigenous ordnance factories and other Public Sector Undertakings; and

(d) whether in view of the spectre of terrorism looming large, the free access to private sector both Indian and foreign in manufacturing arms and ammunition, would not pose a serious security hazard and if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) and (b) The Government has not yet taken any decision on the recommendations of the Selection Committee for selection of Raksha Udyog Ratnas.

(c) Selection of RURs is not intended to dilute the role of Ordnance Factories and Defence Public Sector Undertakings but is aimed at ensuring an effective participation of the industry, harnessing their potential and utilizing the resources available both in the public and private sector in order to accelerate the pace of self-reliance in defence production.

(d) The security concerns have been addressed by incorporating suitable provisions in the guidelines for licensing production of arms and ammunition in the private sector.